

REPORTS OF SITUATION CONFERENCES



Convened by the
EAST ASIA CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE
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PREFACE

WHEN THE East Asia Christian Conference convened the three Situation Conferences whose reports are here published, it set before these Conferences eight questions. The questions as formulated sought to convey the sense of crisis which the modern Christian movement faces. This crisis is the result of three facts: the fact that today Christians from all over the world are facing the whole world in mission, the consequent fact that participation in mission is posing searching and uncomfortable questions to the Churches, and the discovery made in so many areas that the Churches are imprisoned in outmoded structures of administration, inter-Church relationships and congregational life, and in irrelevant patterns of institutional work.

Why is it not possible to ignore questions such as these and remain within the bounds of the familiar and the accustomed? Why ask questions which are bound to raise tensions among us because they face us with the necessity of making hard decisions? The answer depends on another question: Do we really want to share the life that is in Jesus Christ? For to share in it is to share in His mission to mankind, and it is His mission which puts the questions which we cannot evade.

Jesus is putting these questions to His people by involving them all in responsibility for mission, and by drawing them together in each place and throughout the world in one calling. No less compellingly He puts these questions by the changes that are taking place in the life of the world over which also He is Lord. The present position in which we are has been compared to that of mountain climbers seeking a way over a mountain which has not been climbed before. The truth to remember is that it is God who made the mountain. It is His questions that we need to answer, questions both in the world's life and in the Church's life, if we want to share His life.

The question is, do we? If we do, we shall find Him, who in His incarnate life had nowhere to lay His head, "outside the camp."

If the members of our churches in East and West are to understand the true implications of what we in these Conferences have tried to say, it may be useful for us to share with them some of the convictions which moved us to speak as we have done. First of all, in all our discussions we have tried to be true to the situations from which we came. We were men and women drawn from the several Churches in Asia and, therefore, under obligation to speak responsibly out of the life of the Churches to which we belonged. Secondly, we had constantly to keep in mind the temptations to which we were exposed. There was the temptation to speak first about

ourselves, our resources and our tasks, but we knew that it was only as we spoke first of Him and His mission that we would be able to speak in terms of the right priorities. Not our survival, but what He is doing, determines the true perspective. Also, there was the temptation to take refuge in abstractions and to give answers which were not our answers, for which we felt no responsibility before Jesus Christ. We knew, too, that the answers we gave had to be given together, because we, "all in each place," were questioned together by Him.

Lastly, we were constantly aware of the implications of our answers for action. The Situation Conferences were set up in order that specific action in local, national, and regional areas may result. There was little point, therefore, in simply piling more words on those already said in so many other conferences. In any case our world is out of love with words.

Some of the decisions taken at these Situation Conferences, therefore, were plans made by national groups for Joint Action for Mission with its several implications for their countries. It was understood that responsibility for action in the light of the reports rested on the Churches together in one place, on the Churches in one place and their related mission agencies through joint consultation and decision, and by the mission agencies themselves in terms of their own responsibilities. The continuing task of the East Asia Christian Conference is simply to keep probing each situation until new vision is embodied in fresh obedience.

On behalf of the three Conferences,

ALAN A. BRASH
D. T. NILES
Secretaries

THINKING TOGETHER ABOUT OUR CHRISTIAN CALLING

*The Eight Questions**

ALL OVER THE WORLD we Christians are learning more and more that as the company of the people of Jesus Christ we are called to share in His mission to the people around us. We are at the same time learning that we are called to engage in that mission together with our fellow Christians in our own country and neighborhood. Have we ever asked ourselves what this means for the use we make as churches, of men and money, of time and talents, and for the activities carried on by the church of which we are members and by the churches in our country together?

1. What are the positions at the frontier of the mission which must be held at all costs?

The word "frontier" is used in this question to designate the actual positions in which the Church is engaging the world in its "unfaith." The question seeks to find out what those minimum activities of the Church must be, in any situation, if in that situation it is to be a missionary community.

As Christian congregations we are called to be obedient to Jesus Christ. We need to ask ourselves how far the activities in which our church engages express that obedience. We shall find that some of those activities are essential to it, for there are things that their obedience to Jesus Christ always calls churches to do. They include the worship of God through Jesus Christ, real fellowship with our fellow Christians, service in all kinds of ways to men round about us and bringing men to know Jesus Christ for themselves. But the way in which we do these things does not necessarily remain exactly the same as in the past, for the circumstances in which we do them change. And there are other things which churches do besides these essential activities. So we need to ask ourselves whether all the activities of our church are really done out of obedience to Jesus Christ and because they are ways of sharing in His mission, or whether some should be done in a different way or not done at all. This is the real test of the worth of our activities as churches. The question is not whether

*What is here given are the eight questions with annotations which were sent out for study by the Churches and the Christian Councils participating in the Situation Conferences and which formed the basis of discussion at the Conferences themselves. During discussions, however, the true implication of each of the questions seemed to need further explanation. In preparing the original document for inclusion in this report, it was therefore felt wise to include also in the text the further explanations which had been found necessary. These are in every case the paragraph *which follows* each question.

we like them, or whether they increase our prestige in eyes of the world, or whether they make us feel more secure, but whether they help to make Jesus Christ more widely known and loved and served.

2. What are the growing edges of the church's work and witness which must be encouraged and supported?

This question is intended primarily to elicit factual answers. What are the places and activities in which we can see signs that the churches are actually growing, both numerically and in their effective encounter with, and penetration into, the society in which they are set?

If we are obedient to Jesus Christ we shall not regard our church as a kind of private society, seeking to protect itself, and content with its own life. Jesus Christ came into this world, died, and rose from the dead for the sake of *all* men. The company of His people must therefore be an outward-looking company, knowing that it exists for the sake of God and for the sake of all men and not for its own sake. So it is rightly concerned to see at what points it is growing and to encourage that growth. This is not to say that the value of the activities of our church can be measured simply by whether growth results from them; this is not the case. Worship, for example, is offered for the sake of God and it cannot be valued simply by whether the church grows as a result. Nevertheless, one test that we should apply to our church life is whether growth is taking place. What are the things that we are doing in our church which actually bring people face to face with Jesus Christ? What experiments are being made in new ways of service and witness which are effective and should be supported and developed?

3. Are there things which the churches have been doing which should now be given up (a) because they are out of date, (b) because they are unproductive, (c) because they are wasteful of resources of time, men and money?

God in His mercy can use anything for His purposes. The issue this question raises is whether we have faced in the things that we are doing the priorities that are set for us by the actual challenges which the churches are facing in contemporary society.

Obedience to Jesus Christ means obedience *today*, in the living present, for Jesus Christ is the great contemporary of every age. Activities and ways of working in the church which rightly expressed its obedience in a previous period do not necessarily do so in the changed circumstances of today. So we must look at the activities of our church to see which are necessary for its real life and work today, and whether there are any which are just left over from yesterday, or are continued for reasons other than our calling to be the people of Jesus Christ, perhaps because there

happens to be money to support them coming from Christians in other parts of the world. Which of our activities, as a church, does our obedience to Jesus Christ require us to continue? Are there activities undertaken by our church which involve resources of men and money, which, if they were *our* men and money, we would use differently?

4. Are there activities of the church which need to be handed over to other agencies, and, if so, what are they?

In answering this question it is essential not to approach the question in terms of what must be handed over because we are compelled to do so. The approach should rather be in terms of what we are prepared voluntarily to give up in order to do things of greater priority, and what we must seek to do in common with our fellow citizens in our several countries.

Sometimes obedience to Jesus Christ leads Churches to do things in service to men which no one else is doing. Then others may come to see that these things are good and necessary for men's well-being and so come to render such service also, even though they may not share our Christian faith. Thus, in many countries in the world, it was Christians who first provided schools and hospitals, and later other public bodies saw that it was their duty to provide such services. We Christians ought to be glad when others recognize their duty to serve their fellow men. We ought to be in the forefront in recognizing and meeting men's needs, but we ought not to think we have a right to monopolize such service. In the changes which are taking place in men's ways of living together, there are activities of the churches which would be better carried on by responsible groups of citizens, responsible to the public and not officially to the church. In some countries schools and/or hospitals would come into this category. What activities of this kind are there in your situation, and what steps can be taken about them?

5. What are the new tasks to be undertaken?

The question does not ask for a listing of a whole range of activities which it would be desirable for the churches to undertake, but for an honest choice, in the light of the preceding questions, of those tasks which have first claim on us within the missionary purpose of the church.

We are all aware that men's ways of living together are changing very quickly in our time. Men are working at new sorts of jobs, in new places. People who used to live and work in villages are now living and working in towns. Places where there used to be fields now have factories. Buses, radio, electricity and new tools are changing the ways of villages. Because of these changes our obedience to Jesus Christ calls us to new tasks, to meet new needs of men and to make Jesus Christ known in new places and amidst new ways of living and working. Are the churches

in your country facing such challenges as these? What are they doing about them? Is your congregation helping your church to meet them by its prayers, its thought, its concern, and the service of its members; or is it hindering by thinking only of itself and its own needs?

6. In what way can the over-all task be thought out and carried out together by the total people of God in each area?

There are various ways of acting together, ranging from asking one Church to undertake a task on behalf of all and with the support of all, to a united action by several Churches. The problem to be faced is how a common strategy of Christian operation in any given area should be worked out and how a common plan could be agreed on for the use of available resources.

We cannot be obedient to Jesus Christ by ourselves, in isolation from our fellow Christians in the other congregations of our Church and in other Churches in our country. Christ's mission is one, and if we are to share in it, we must share in it together with others whom He has called into the company of His people. Are we doing anything about this? Do we know the other congregations of Christian people in our neighborhood? Do we think and pray with them about our common task, and carry it out together so far as is possible? Do we encourage our Church leaders when they make plans for common work with other Churches, or do we look at them suspiciously, wondering whether it means that our own group might lose something?

7. What are the implications, as we face these issues, of our denominational separateness from one another and our involvement in our respective denominational families?

The questions 6-8 should be seen against the background of the area of freedom in which we can act together without infringing convictions about churchmanship, though answering them will certainly put questions to denominational self-sufficiency.

One reason why we are not accustomed to thinking about the task of the total people of God in one area is that most of us have lived our Christian life in one denomination separated from others. We have been more related to a mission board or a parent church or a denominational family in other parts of the world than to our fellow Christians in the next village or the next area. Are we sometimes afraid of moving out of our familiar groups to meet our fellow Christians in others parts of our own country for fear that we may lose the support of people — prayer and money — which comes through these traditional channels? What should we do about this in view of the need that the whole company of Christ's people in one country should witness and work as one people?

8. *What are the particular relationships and forms of administrative organization by which the Churches can better fulfill the calling to do together both the old things that should go on and the new things that await our doing in our time?*

This question is not intended to envisage the pooling of resources to be administered by some joint body, nor is it intended to mean simply adding some new joint projects to existing work that would leave our present separateness unquestioned. It asks primarily that there be discerned natural units of activity, either geographical or functional, within which a group of Churches can usefully make common decisions and effectively act together.

If our obedience to Jesus Christ and our sharing in His mission requires us to do some things better or differently and to engage in new tasks, we shall have to look at the ways in which we do our work in the church — the organizations through which we do it and the relationships which it requires. Organizations should be the servant, not the master, of our obedience to Jesus Christ. So we need to ask ourselves whether our present ways of arranging things and getting work done are suitable instruments to help us to express our obedience to Jesus Christ today. Do they need changes? How can we work together more fully as the one company of Christ's people in our own locality, in our own country, and in our own region? Should some of our organizational arrangements be altered or abandoned? Should some be made stronger?

THE EAST ASIA CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

Report of the Situation Conference held at Madras, India February 26—March 4, 1963

THE Church in Asia must discharge its mission. The aim of the East Asia Christian Conference is the mutual strengthening of the churches in this region for the fulfillment of their common task.

The common task is focused on two concerns — whether everything which is humanly possible is being done to help the churches grow, and whether the life and witness of the churches is of such a quality that it truly manifests the light and unity and reconciliation that is in Jesus Christ. Is the Christian Church growing in numbers, and is it acting as an effective leaven of the Kingdom in the human community?

A decision was, therefore, taken at the meeting of the Continuation Committee of the East Asia Christian Conference held at Bangalore in November, 1961, to hold three “situation” conferences in the East Asia region: in Madras, for Pakistan, India and Ceylon; in Singapore, for Thailand, Burma, Singapore, Malaya, Borneo, Sarawak, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand; and in Tokyo, for Okinawa, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Behind this plan lay three considerations:

1. It was increasingly evident that the time had fully come for Churches and their related mission agencies *in a given geographical area* to come together to face together, as God’s people in that place, their total mission, and to seek for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling it.
2. It was urgent to assess the effect, upon the life and witness of the churches in Asia, of the growth and development of world confessional movements. What role should the “younger churches” play in such movements, and what were the possibilities which such movements held for the fulfillment of the Church’s task in this region as a whole?
3. How might the churches in this region take their share in the “missionary” enterprise, in that witness to Jesus Christ which a church must bear beyond the frontiers of its own situation?

This report is issued by the Conference held in Madras. It is addressed to the Churches in East and West and to the mission agencies whose work and responsibility in Pakistan, India and Ceylon were the concern of the Conference. Those who attended the Conference were chosen by the Churches and sent through the respective National Christian Councils.

The most crucial step in the process envisaged cannot be initiated by the East Asia Christian Conference as such. It is the Churches in their relationship to one another which must decide what actions to take. This report is addressed to them.

Madras
March 5, 1963

CHANDU KARACHI
DENZIL DE SILVA
Co-Chairmen

JOINT ACTION FOR MISSION

THE Church's concern for mission is its concern that the love of God made known in Jesus Christ may be so commended to men in the power of the Holy Spirit that they will turn to Him and accept Him as their Saviour and their Lord. The activities in which Christians engage in their witness to His love have each their own distinctive purpose, but they are held together within the one mission of the Church.

The purpose of this Situation Conference is to invite the attention of the Churches, East and West, and mission agencies to the new possibilities in mission which we believe exist and to the next steps which they must take mutually to support one another. Joint Action for Mission is the necessary consequence of the previous principle of comity as well as the natural expression of insights born of the Ecumenical Movement. The convictions and concerns set out in this report are to form the basis of local and regional, denominational and interdenominational, consultations which alone can take decision on specific issues. The call is a call to action.

That we look at the changed situation in our several countries
in which the Church has to be and in which it must fulfill its
mission.

The situation in which God summons His Church to act in mission varies from generation to generation and from place to place. God remains Sovereign Lord of every historical situation. Our obedience is to be sensitive to His Spirit as He summons and constrains us through the events of our time.

The revolutionary situation in our countries includes a radical re-direction in social and political intention. Traditional communities with their roots in the joint family and an agrarian economy are being replaced by the national community, the welfare state, and an industrial society. Also, current ideas of human personality and community question the basic assumptions which in the past underlay ethical decisions and ideas of human destiny. Therefore, nation-building affects not only the external manifestations of social and political life but involves a radical questioning of the inner, cultural and religious pre-suppositions of our societies. There is also a new quest for God.

In the work of the Church the strongest evidence for the seriousness of this quest is found in the way in which there is response to the Gospel among tribal and ethnic communities. There is also the widespread enrollment in Bible Correspondence Courses which many Christian agencies

report. Among the intelligentsia, too, there is a new openness to the Christian message. There are many who inquire about the Faith, while some have been converted and come to baptism. All this in spite of the fact that, in most parts of our society, the churches are not growing in numbers.

The question is how can the Church meet the challenges of this situation and respond to the signs of growth as effectively as possible? Christians may not live an enclosed and self-centered life in their churches.

That the place, purpose and administration of Institutions of Christian Service be reconsidered in their relation to the administrative structures of the Church, the witnessing life of the Christian Community and the involvement of Christians in the common life.

In this historical situation the Spirit of God is pressing on us the need to make changes in the traditional structures of the Church's life, service, and witness. In some of our countries Christian institutions of service, such as schools and hospitals, are coming under the increasing control of the welfare state. Industrial ventures come more and more under state control. It is a sign that societies now regard it as their responsibility to be concerned with the whole life and welfare of their people.

Christian participation in this development should be increasingly expressed by Christians working within secular institutions rather than in Church institutions. With respect to its own institutions, the Church must decide about them in the light of the whole Christian task in an area and of the resources available. Institutions may either be related directly to a Church's administrative structure, or administered by boards representative of several Churches working together, or made the responsibility of Christians who will run them without any direct control by Church authorities, or handed over to community or state organizations. The administration of each institution should be decided in terms of these possibilities.

In making these decisions, the following should be borne in mind:

the availability of competent Christian personnel both to man and to administer an institution;

the priority of an institution in relation to other tasks;

the purpose for which the institution exists and its ability to fulfill that purpose;

the importance of Christians participating fully in the life of the community as a whole;

the obligation which the Church has to demonstrate the significance of the Faith in such fields as medicine and education;

the need to maintain training institutions in which Christians may be prepared for service in the wider community;

the fact that in a given situation a Church institution may be the only way to assure that the needs of neglected groups are met;

the necessity of freeing the central structures of the Church from the burden of administering institutions.

That inasmuch as the worshipping community is itself the agent of mission, the congregational life of this community be so ordered as to make it effective in its social context.

A scattering of Christians is now taking place in each of our countries on an unprecedented scale; this *diaspora* is especially clear in the great new industrial centres but is not restricted to them. For employment and professional reasons — as government servants or as members of secular agencies involved in administration, industry, and community projects of every kind, and as members of new housing estates — Christians are dispersed throughout our lands. Whenever this takes place, these new groups of Christians are in fact new congregations of the Church to be gathered, though they themselves may not recognize this.

Here is offered the opportunity for first steps in restructuring the congregation. Traditionally, we have attempted to follow the concept of one minister, one congregation, one church building. In practice there are comparatively few places in our countries where this has been achieved, and a pastoral ministry close to the daily life of the church has seldom been possible. A situation of rapid social and religious change leads us to look out for those men and women of the people of God who through the Holy Spirit have received gifts for upbuilding the Christian household, so that they may function not primarily as helpers of the ordained minister but rather as witnesses among, and pastors of, the newly emerging groups.

It is no longer possible to conceive of one minister serving all the people in a locality. In many places there is no longer a homogeneous population. This means that there is a need for various forms of ministry and various types of ministers. Nothing can be a substitute for an adequately trained full-time ministry of the Word and Sacraments. However, it should be asked whether only those should be ordained who have had systematic theological training. Besides the task of strengthening existing ministries, consideration should also be given to the way in which the church should recognize and encourage individuals or teams who seek to render their witness and service outside the ecclesiastical structure. The Biblical truth must be acknowledged that ministry is not restricted to serving at altar or in pulpit, but finds its right forms when altar and pulpit are directly related to contemporary life. Small Christian cells in a special social milieu may make a more effective missionary witness to

Christ than local congregations grouped on a geographical basis are usually able to make. They may also be effective instruments of Christian nurture and renewal of Christian commitment in the local congregation. The question is not one of modifying an institutional enterprise but of renewing the people of God.

In the restructuring of congregational life, another factor that will determine what needs to be done will be the financial policies of the church concerned. It is important that there should be a basic financial structure of a church which is dependent on its own economic resources. Financial help from outside should be given in terms of agreed priorities. We would suggest that the order of such priorities be (1) united projects, (2) denominational projects which are part of a common strategy, and (3) projects conceived and executed purely denominationally.

The life of a church also should be so ordered that its responsibilities for the training of the ministry and participation in the preaching of the Gospel will be supported to the utmost by financial resources of its own. This cannot happen without a deeper understanding and exercise of Christian stewardship.

That the ways in which the leadership of the churches as well as the Christian people as a whole are trained for mission be reviewed and recast in the light of a more adequate strategy.

Until now training has usually implied centralized institutions to which Christians are brought from their congregations. We now see a great need for various kinds of training, essentially flexible, to be given to Christians where they live and work. The place where this training is given is wherever a man with the vocation to teach meets with those wishing to learn; it is not dependent upon bricks and mortar. Of particular importance is the training of congregations, however big, however small, in being the people of God in worship, mission and service. Such training requires the work of a ministry of Word, Sacrament and pastoral care adequate in numbers and quality. It must be plainly stated that the churches in our countries do not at present have such a ministry, and one of our most urgent tasks is to remedy this defect.

The training of the laity is closely related to the training of the congregation. Laymen involved in the many structures of secular life must be helped to see their work — in trade unions, in politics, in social welfare, etc. — in terms of their fundamental vocation to be the Church in the world of their work and everyday life.

Another form of training which is becoming increasingly urgent is training for dialogue with members of other faiths. It is necessary that Christians have a firm grasp of their own Faith as well as a sensitive appreciation of faiths other than their own, including the most common faith of modern man — secularism. There is the common humanity in Christ which we all share. This training will normally be in small groups or seminars where the meeting between Christians and those of other faiths actually takes place.

Lastly, there is a training too often ignored; this is the training for fidelity in loneliness. For the most part, Christians in our time will be in very small groups or entirely alone, surrounded by those who acknowledge no loyalty to Jesus Christ. We need to consider how best we may form such isolated Christians into men and women who will not only bear the strain of loneliness, but also will find strength to witness to their neighbors to the faith by which they live.

That we consider the call to Joint Action for Mission which arises out of the conviction that the doing of these tasks and the meeting of these challenges should be and can only be accomplished through commonly agreed policies and procedures.

Joint action is the action of the whole people of God in a place for the fulfillment of the total mission of the Church in that place. Churches are called upon to act together as one body for they are one in Christ even in their separateness. This underlines the need for radical change in the structures and attitudes of churches — both in East and West — and mission agencies and demands real partnership between them in the Church's mission. Devolution was one answer to one particular historical situation. Necessary as this was, we need to move beyond the policy of devolution through which the role of mission agencies was limited to the sending of personnel and funds and did not bring them into adequate consultation on how these were to be used. Too often this has stifled initiative in the churches of Asia and in their supporting Churches.

Joint Action means that in any one geographical area the various Christian denominations consider together, along with the mission agencies with which they are respectively related, their present position in the area, what work is being done, where it is in some measure successful, where it is failing, what resources are available in men and money for the fulfilling of their common task, and the actual steps which they will now take to fulfill it.

This change to multilateral relationships, both within one area and between the Churches of an area and mission agencies abroad, clearly involves a demand that we see our vested interests for what they are and no longer confuse denominational pride with loyalty to God's gifts given to us in our separate denominations. The plea is not for a new method or arrangement of church work, but for response to the pressure of the Spirit of God that we see His will in a deeper and more Biblical light.

Put concretely, Joint Action for Mission asks of Churches and mission agencies:

1. Real sharing and complete frankness about successes and failures, and about resources — physical, financial, and in persons.
2. Agreement about priorities, which will certainly involve hard decisions and conflicts of power.
3. The putting of resources of manpower and money from any one country and from outside it at the disposal of a denomination

or united body made responsible for a piece of work with no expectation of denominational dividend or return.

4. The trusting of each other in our separate denominations to do the particular tasks allotted to us — without this trust, joint action is impossible.

The church in any one area is the responsibility of the whole Church and also bears responsibility for the mission which stretches to the ends of the earth. This means that churches and their related mission agencies in any area may find themselves faced with possibilities which are beyond their resources and strength. In such a situation, Joint Action for Mission will mean their calling for help from Churches and agencies which have hitherto been unrelated to them. When the nets are breaking for the multitude of fishes, we should be prepared to call upon our partners in other boats. Conversely, we must be ready to go from where we are to Bangalore or Birmingham if our help should be needed.

Lest we be misunderstood, we wish to say that Joint Action for Mission does not mean a simple pooling of resources, nor does it mean a redistribution of resources — a different sharing of the cake. Neither does it mean that every piece of work should be done jointly. It does mean that as Christ's mission is one, we dare no longer act as if it were as plural as are our churches and mission agencies.

It is as we take the first steps in relation to Joint Action for Mission that we shall learn of the strains and stresses, struggles and pains, quite certain to be expected in such new procedures, but we condemn ourselves spiritually to stagnation so long as we refuse to move forward in this direction.

We recognize that these changes in the Church in Asia will place a heavy burden on the Churches and mission agencies which have been working in this region. The process of adjustment and re-education of those who support the mission of the Church by prayer and giving will not be carried through without painful rethinking and receptivity to new ideas. Christians in Asia should help in this. Together we will need to discover new ways of forming personal links of prayer and caring between the churches.

Joint Action for Mission involves new decisions and action on the part of the leaders of churches, church boards and councils, and of mission agencies. These decisions will in most cases be taken together, but it must be recognized that, in the new context of fraternal relationships between churches in East and West, initiative for change can come either from the local church or from a supporting Church. There will also be the demand on local congregations in each area and on the staffs of Christian institutions for costly decisions which can only be taken after considerable education and explanation. Today, in many places Christians find themselves prisoners of their situation; the gift of God's freedom for new and creative action will only be given when we pay the price of obedience. Are we ready?

In planning for Joint Action for Mission, the following steps may be envisaged. It is assumed that the Churches concerned in this process have full autonomy to make their own decisions.*

First Step: Leaders of the churches in one compact area meet to ask each other how they are fulfilling or failing to fulfill the one mission of Christ given to His Church. This meeting may be called by an appropriate Christian Council or by one or more Church leaders in the area concerned.

Second Step: These leaders are joined by those representing mission agencies in seeking answers to such questions as: What tasks of mission are we now doing and with what success? What new challenges face us and what new tasks should be taken in hand? What resources of men and money are available to us? (A complete and frank sharing of information of how much money, land and other investments we each have or have access to is necessary.) How should we together redeploy these resources in the way best calculated to fulfill the tasks God has given us in this area?

Third Step: Those involved in the Second Step share with their respective constituencies the Biblical ground upon which Joint Action for Mission is based (the people of God everywhere are one body, put in one world with a mission to proclaim one Gospel), and the responsibility which lies on every member of the Church to be obedient to God's call to mission and to engage in constant intercession for its fulfillment. The local congregations must be involved in the stock-taking of the actual situation.

Fourth Step: Responsible leaders of the Churches and mission agencies will then come together to decide about the redeployment of men and money. So far as possible, those present must be in a position to take decisions which their respective Churches and boards will accept and support.

*The Conference draws attention to the fact that these proposals for Joint Action for Mission raise issues with which the Churches are concerned also through their Inter-Church Aid agencies. It suggests that the Consultation at Hong Kong in October, 1963, should be invited to include in its program a consideration of the findings of the three Situation Conferences.

THE CONFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF JOINT ACTION FOR MISSION

THE FRUIT of the Church's mission which is the building up of the Body of Christ necessarily implies the extension of the churches. At the same time, the object of mere denominational growth with all its implications of prestige and competition is incompatible with the proper concern for mission in its true sense. When the Holy Spirit calls a new people into the life of the Church, we must expect that that life will take new forms in accordance with the specific experience of that people. The new will therefore not be a mere extension of the old.

In all cases the specific objective to be achieved must be that new work should be so related to existing work that there is neither duplication of effort nor the creation of separated communities. No project under Joint Action for Mission should create a separate loyalty apart from the church or churches in the locality.

Joint action in the face of emergencies and in the whole field of Christian service can be and has been undertaken without seriously challenging confessional positions in depth. But where joint action leads to the actual extension of the Church, questions of confessional differences are bound to arise. This means that every venture into the field of joint action must, of necessity, render more urgent the task of Church Union. At the same time joint action can and should be undertaken before Churches are united, and even when there is no immediate prospect of union. Joint Action for Mission is in no sense a substitute for, or an alternative to, Church Union, but is a challenge to the Churches and their supporting agencies in specific situations to give the call to mission priority over confessional interests.

Recognizing that it is God's will that His Church should be one, and also that in His mercy He has used Churches of differing confessional traditions to commend the Gospel, the Faith and Order Conference at Lund in 1952 called on the Churches to do together everything except those things which by conscience they are obliged to do separately. The New Delhi Assembly in 1961 defined the goal of the Faith and Order work of the World Council of Churches as the manifesting of the unity of the Church "in each place." Without calling into question confessional positions there is still a very large area of theological and practical freedom in which joint action can take place.

The basic principle affecting timing is that in the field of joint action, as well as of Church Union, there is the greatest urgency. Each must be

pursued in its own right. Specific decisions must depend on consultations taken in terms of concrete situations. In these situations the problems that will need to be faced will not be merely in the realm of differing confessional traditions, but also in the realm of traditional practices and procedures.

In formulating these convictions and concerns regarding the confessional implications of Joint Action for Mission, we are aware of the plans already made to have these questions further discussed in consultations being convened by the World Council of Churches in October, 1963, and by the East Asia Christian Conference in February, 1964. It will therefore be useful to list the kinds of questions which we consider will have to be faced in these consultations:

1. What are the implications for mission of the distinction between extending a Church and planting the seed of the Gospel in a new situation?
2. What are the implications of Joint Action for Mission for the confessional position of participating Churches?
3. What are the implications of Joint Action for Mission for the procedures and practices followed by confessional or denominational agencies in their relationship with Churches in Asia?
4. How may the strength and values of confessional traditions be made available to Joint Action for Mission?
5. What principles should govern the timing of the steps we must take both in Joint Action for Mission and in the work of Church Union?

THE EAST ASIA CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE
Report of the Situation Conference held at
Amagisanso (Tokyo), Japan
March 8—14, 1963

THE Church in Asia must discharge its mission. The aim of the East Asia Christian Conference is the mutual strengthening of the churches in this region for the fulfillment of their common task.

The common task is focused on two concerns — whether everything which is humanly possible is being done to help the churches grow, and whether the life and witness of the churches is of such a quality that it truly manifests the light and unity and reconciliation that is in Jesus Christ. Is the Christian Church growing in numbers, and is it acting as an effective leaven of the Kingdom in the human community?

A decision was, therefore, taken at the meeting of the Continuation Committee of the East Asia Christian Conference held at Bangalore in November, 1961, to hold three “situation” conferences in the East Asia region: in Madras, for Pakistan, India and Ceylon; in Singapore, for Thailand, Burma, Singapore, Malaya, Borneo, Sarawak, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand; and in Tokyo, for Okinawa, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Behind this plan lay three considerations:

1. It was increasingly evident that the time had fully come for Churches and their related mission agencies *in a given geographical area* to come together to face together, as God’s people in that place, their total mission, and to seek for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling it.
2. It was urgent to assess the effect, upon the life and witness of the churches in Asia, of the growth and development of world confessional movements. What role should the “younger churches” play in such movements, and what were the possibilities which such movements held for the fulfillment of the Church’s task in this region as a whole?
3. How might the churches in this region take their share in the “missionary” enterprise, in that witness to Jesus Christ which a church must bear beyond the frontiers of its own situation?

This report is issued by the Conference held at Amagisanso in Japan. It is addressed to the Churches in East and West and to the mission agencies whose work and responsibility in Japan, Korea, Okinawa, Taiwan and Hong Kong were the concern of the Conference. Those who attended the Conference were chosen by the Churches and sent through the respective National Christian Councils. We regret deeply that some of the Churches in our region were not able to be with us because of confessional or political reasons, but all the more we have remembered them in prayer through our common Lord.

The most crucial step in the process envisaged cannot be initiated by the East Asia Christian Conference, nor by the Situation Conference as such. It is the Churches in their relationship to one another which must decide what actions to take. This report is addressed to them.

Amagisanso
March 14, 1963

TAKESHI MUTO
C. H. HWANG
Co-Chairmen

A COMMON LIFE, A COMMON MISSION, A COMMON HOPE

WE HAVE COME together here at Amagisanso from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Okinawa, for this Consultation convened by the East Asia Christian Conference. Here we have found one another in Christ. It has been for us a time of joy and of thankfulness to God. We have also heard anew Christ's call to us as His people in this area — the call to participate together in His continuing mission. We have come to realize the involvement of our churches in the revolution of Asia where the nations are searching for self-determination and self-realization, and where people are caught up in rapid industrialization with its consequent social change. The command of Christ to His Church is that it move from a self-centered to a God-centered life, to a life as the saved and saving community, to a life as His servant people in and for the world. The urgency of our common situation and the necessity of obedience to our Lord compel us to consider how He is seeking to use us together to accomplish His mission in this area in our time.

While drawn from many Churches we are not authorized to speak officially for them. Yet we address this statement to the Churches in our lands, and to our sister Churches abroad with whom we are related in mission, in the earnest hope that whatever the Spirit has said to us in these days may be heard, and heeded, by the churches individually and collectively. It is only as the churches in a particular nation and situation come together to consider the common task to which Christ is calling them that resolutions will be converted into action.

I. What is the situation?

Our discussions here have shown us that we have in common both the fact that we live in a changing society, and that we face widely differing opportunities and difficulties. We have a common witness to make and are confronted with many common tasks, even while we recognize the importance of fulfilling our mission in ways which meet the special challenges of our various areas.

We have been heartened to find in our conversations a number of points where growth in our churches is notable. The Church in Taiwan is far advanced towards fulfilling a plan to double its membership in ten years. There has been a significant growth among the people in the mountain areas. The Church in Korea has experienced continuing expansion in rural areas and new opportunities in chaplaincy work, both in the armed services and in prisons. Other representatives have drawn attention to the local parish as the place of effective activity. In particular,

Hong Kong reported rapid growth mainly through its schools and churches. In Japan, Taiwan and Korea the Churches are pioneering in new approaches to workers in industrial centers. The United Church of Christ in Japan has also a significant program of work in developing apartment areas. In many countries there is re-awakened life in the churches as a result of their concern for the needs of society around them.

Yet, even as we give thanks for these signs of growth and the evidence of the Spirit's continued guidance and blessing, we acknowledge many weaknesses. We see the signs of God's judgment upon us that our churches have failed to discern the times and to be obedient to their Lord.

We confess that in large measure our churches have not been where the people are. Evangelism has often meant withdrawing individuals from their involvement in society rather than transforming their relationships within it. This means that the churches do not enter sacrificially into the life of the communities within which they exist.

Families uprooted from their normal social context and individuals away from home in strange surroundings often fail to find a welcome in our churches. Traditional patterns of congregational life, adequate for another age, tend to be parochial and irrelevant today.

Our people long for direction and purpose in national life, but for most of our churches the prophetic vision, which once placed them in the vanguard of creative social change, has given way to a traditionalism which does not speak to the younger generation. We realize that we have allowed our concern for ourselves, often in the name of Christian nurture, to take precedence over our concern for those outside our fellowship whom Christ would also save. This whole situation serves, too, to make even more disastrous the divisions of the Church in all our countries.

II. What are the new areas of opportunity?

One type of insistent need is represented by the large national groups living outside their own countries: one-half million Koreans in Japan, and substantial communities of Chinese in both Korea and Japan. In addition, there are 5,600 students from other Asian countries studying in Japan. There is also the need for a diversified trained leadership to render more creative service in the new areas of the mission of the Church in modern Asia.

Throughout Asia, youth constitutes at least one half of the total population. In each nation and in each community we are concerned that the Church begin to bridge the gap, so prevalent in modern society, between the older and the younger generations. Youth is a potential for the nation and for the Church. Nation-building and politics also constitute an urgent area of opportunity to which the Church should address itself. It must, by its witness, constantly raise the question: By what values and with what strategies are leaders governing their people? The Church needs to proclaim the Lordship of Christ and His rule over the political structures of our respective lands.

We must think together as churches of this region as to how we may meet these common needs.

The lure of the cities is drawing large sections of our people from the farms and small towns. There they confront a life fundamentally different from the life they left behind. How can our churches be of service to these people as they seek to adjust to strange and often disquieting forms of urban life? As these people obtain jobs in factories and find their lives increasingly depersonalized, in what way can the Church meet their need for community? With the onslaught of mass media many of our people are caught in the vortex of inherited values, traditional religion, and the dictates of modern society. How can a ministry in Christ's name bring significance and direction to them in their daily living?

Our church activities are still based largely on the existence of a professional clergy, but the role of the laity is becoming increasingly important. How can we help all our people find purpose in their work, whatever it be, and help them to help each other to understand the relation of their faith to what they do? Students and the young professional class constitute the leaders of tomorrow. How can we so interpret the Gospel to them that it will be both intellectually compelling and personally demanding?

We affirm that it is not enough to think of the task of our churches as defined simply by these needs and opportunities. It is a task which extends beyond our own local areas, beyond our national boundaries, beyond Asia itself. No immediate task is truly conceived except as it is seen as a part of the world-wide mission of the Church of Jesus Christ.

III. How can we improve our structures and patterns of work to make them more adequate?

Existing structures and patterns of work, already established, often make difficult, if not impossible, new forms of mission appropriate to new situations. If the churches are to have the resources to advance creatively at the growing edges, they must be willing to decrease, and at times give up, some work in which they are now engaged.

1. One pattern of work which must be reconsidered is the relationship between our churches and our fellow churches abroad. Often in requests for assistance in personnel and funds, established work is put first, the result being that there are few, if any, resources available for new tasks. On the other hand, it is increasingly difficult for our fellow churches abroad to continue to support established work only. They, with us, must be engaged in advancing mission. How can we, in consultation with each other, re-evaluate existing work and initiate new experiments where they are needed? Also, while receiving support from abroad to meet growing opportunities, how can we safeguard our Churches' independence and integrity?

2. We rejoice that our church-related schools, through the years, have set such a conspicuous example of good education that society at large

has sought to emulate them. But today it is the secular schools, not the church schools, which provide the great new area for joint mission. The majority of students and faculty members in our nations are to be found in these schools. How can we free some of our resources already committed to our own institutions, so that we can meet these opportunities for evangelism more effectively? For instance, to what extent today is secondary education a need which the Church must meet? Yet, the evangelism of all students is such a need. While in Hong Kong the churches' schools still play a large part in the churches' ministry to men, in most of our countries the task of education has increasingly become the task of the welfare state. In such a situation the question arises: How can we balance our substantial support of church-related colleges with the need of the tens of thousands of students in secular institutions who remain untouched by the Gospel? Do we not need to re-evaluate the Church's role in regard to education as a whole? And particularly with regard to the task of evangelism in the schools?

3. The opportunities which confront us also require new and stronger channels of co-operation on the national level. Even among the various agencies already at work on the Church's frontier (audio-visual, literature, specialized student and industrial evangelism) there has been little overall co-ordination. Can the National Christian Councils be made effective agencies for this task? Will this not entail the Churches' taking real responsibility for them, so that the Councils fulfill the purpose for which they were created, to be means of co-operation and expressions of the common concern of the Churches for mission. One requirement, if a National Christian Council is to become truly an agency of the Churches, is that they should attempt to pay for its staff from their own resources.

4. In connection with this we note that the inter-church aid in both the World Council of Churches and the East Asia Christian Conference calls for the co-operation of the National Christian Councils in providing mutual assistance between the Churches and means for their common service to human need. An urgent question to be faced is how to prevent operations in this general field being conducted outside the concern and responsibility of the Churches and the National Christian Councils.

5. The life and ministry of the local parish constitutes in this situation a focus for renewed thought and planning. We suggest that such forms as "the tent-making ministry" and such groupings as the "home church" could provide a more flexible structure for the Church. There is the need, too, to reexamine how lay participation in the life of the Church may be increased, and also how to reduce institutional self-centeredness. All this involves a rethinking of the purpose of the church building and the traditional organization of the congregation.

6. Finally we would urge, in this process of restructuring and re-organizing, that our theological schools also need attention. In all of our countries there is a fragmented and at times competitive approach to theological education. In some places each denomination has several seminaries and each district its own Bible training school. The presence

of so many theological schools inevitably reinforces the tendency towards church division. Can we not, together with our friends abroad, take the initiative in concentrating support in a few good seminaries?

IV. In what ways is God calling us to joint mission today?

We believe that God has called the Churches not only to examine their present activities in the light of these new tasks, but that He is calling them to concrete action together in His name. Therefore, we suggest the following *projects* to be undertaken among us:

1. One of the most effective means of Christian work is the production and distribution of Christian literature. There is need to make available in many languages poignant testimonies to the power of the Gospel. There is also the need for sharing information about Christian work in our several countries. In view of the common languages used throughout this region, one project of joint action can be a co-ordinated literature program and a plan for the training of writers.

2. Leadership training in several fields, especially those in the areas of challenge, continues to be a great need. Could we establish together in this region a roving seminar to train our pastors and lay people? It is necessary also to strengthen the existing program of study in the field of relationship between Christianity and other faiths, and especially the dominant faiths in this region. The Churches should also give greater support to centers of research into the cultures of our countries. Together with these goes the need to ensure that those being trained for the ministry are able to secure within the area the highest theological education.

3. Mass communication (radio, television, film) has revolutionized contemporary life, and the churches must learn to utilize these new media effectively. Radio and TV programming, program research and follow-up must be undertaken together.

4. New opportunities in student work can be fully and effectively grasped only through joint planning and action. The same is true in the field of industrial evangelism.

5. In all of our Churches there are certain areas where exciting growth is taking place. Since doors for fruitful evangelism have already been opened, we are called to consider how we may help each other to make the most of these immediate opportunities.

In addition to these specific projects, we believe God is leading us to make changes in *policies* which will allow more effective response to these new opportunities. In order to accomplish this, we urge that the Churches in each country examine their total task in the light of all available resources, including those from abroad. Only then will they be able to act as responsible stewards of God's gifts.

During our consultations our friends from abroad have repeatedly expressed the willingness of mission agencies to co-operate with our Churches in the formulation of new policy and the execution of new plans. We are called to rethink our patterns of relationship, particularly

the pattern of bilateral relationship which has characterized the past. We are also called to re-evaluate the place and role of the missionary in our Churches. Where do the missionaries today fit into the total life of our churches? How can their presence become normal? Also, how can we modify existing relationships between Churches and their related agencies, so that they may more adequately fulfill the mission of the whole Church as it is expressed in one place. It must be understood that in all thinking about Joint Action for Mission there is no intention to restrict it to work done jointly. Joint action can also be supported by various Churches of work done by one Church where that work is part of a common strategy.

V. What does all this mean for the East Asia Christian Conference?

Throughout our deliberations, we have discovered implications which Joint Action for Mission should have for the East Asia Christian Conference, for there are aspects of our task which can be fulfilled only by the Churches of our several nations combining their vision, their strength, and their resources. The E.A.C.C. can be an instrument for lifting the sights of our individual churches to the goal of witness to the ends of the earth. Specifically, it can increase its service as an avenue for exchange of Asian missionaries between countries in Asia. It can encourage our Churches to consider Asia as a whole and endeavor to send missionary aid to those areas of greatest need and opportunity. We commend the policy of our sister Churches abroad channeling support for such missionary endeavor through the E.A.C.C., but without interfering with the primary responsibility of the Asian churches to support their own missionaries. It is essential that, as soon as possible, the E.A.C.C. should call a consultation to look at the various policies, problems and procedures concerning the selection, training, support and pastoral care of all missionaries in the Asian churches, both those from Asia and from the West.

In order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Christian institutional program which now claims such a large share of personnel and resources, it is urgent that a survey be made in each country, conducted by the Churches in that country, of all Christian service institutions in it, with a view to helping Churches here and abroad to determine priorities of assistance. Such a survey might also make known how specific institutions can be of service to the whole Church in this area, as for example the Tsurukawa Rural Seminary of the United Church of Christ in Japan and the Tao Feng Shan Study Centre in Hong Kong. Each Church should also be encouraged to examine its own institutional program to find what it may have to offer for the total Christian work and witness in this area, and conversely should be urged to refrain from duplicating those specialized facilities which are already available to it from other Churches. For example, the Japan Institute of Christian Education of Rikkyo University has offered to send teams anywhere to hold workshops on human relations.

It is further recommended that E.A.C.C. consider the possibility of holding conferences of an ecumenical nature in particular lands which have had little, if any, direct contact with the Ecumenical Movement, to provide a better understanding of the Ecumenical Movement amongst the Christians in those lands.

VI. What are the implications of Joint Action for Mission for our participation in our denominational families?

Finally, it is recognized that the things which have been said and the issues which have been faced during these days have far-reaching implications for the denominational dividedness of our Churches. We have confronted this situation frankly and find no easy or immediate solution. We recognize that the problem is made more complex by the participation of many of our Churches in world confessional organizations. Yet, we are driven to seek a clearer manifestation in our own countries of our unity in the Body of Christ, that the image of Christ and His mission which we present to the world may be clear and unblurred. Though joint action for mission does not absolve us from the responsibility of continuing to labor for one manifest unity, neither can such common action wait for that unity. We, therefore, exhort our Churches to support with prayer and participation the study conferences being planned by the World Council of Churches and the East Asia Christian Conference to consider the implications of world confessionalism for the mission of the Church. As we earnestly pray that through our increased fellowship, our patient listening to one another, and our joint action, we may be drawn closer to the Christ in whom is our common life, our common mission, and our common hope.

THE EAST ASIA CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

Report of the Situation Conference held at Singapore, Malaya

March 19—26, 1963

THE Church in Asia must discharge its mission. The aim of the East Asia Christian Conference is the mutual strengthening of the churches in this region for the fulfillment of their common task.

The common task is focused on two concerns — whether everything which is humanly possible is being done to help the churches grow, and whether the life and witness of the churches is of such a quality that it truly manifests the light and unity and reconciliation that is in Jesus Christ. Is the Christian Church growing in numbers, and is it acting as an effective leaven of the Kingdom in the human community?

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1. It was increasingly evident that the time had fully come for Churches and their related mission agencies *in a given geographical area* to come together to face together, as God’s people in that place, their total mission, and to seek for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling it.
2. It was urgent to assess the effect, upon the life and witness of the churches in Asia, of the growth and development of world confessional movements. What role should the “younger churches” play in such movements, and what were the possibilities which such movements held for the fulfillment of the Church’s task in this region as a whole?
3. How might the churches in this region take their share in the “missionary” enterprise, in that witness to Jesus Christ which a church must bear beyond the frontiers of its own situation?

This report is issued by the Conference held at Singapore. It is addressed to the Churches in East and West and to the mission agencies

whose work and responsibility were the concern of this Conference. Those who attended the Conference were chosen by the Churches and sent through the respective National Christian Councils.

The most crucial step in the process envisaged cannot be initiated by the East Asia Christian Conference as such. It is the Churches in their relationship to one another which must decide what actions to take. This report is addressed to them.

Singapore
March 26, 1963

ENRIQUE C. SOBREPENA
AYE MYAT KYAW
Co-Chairmen

TO THE CHURCHES AND COUNCILS IN THE E.A.C.C. FROM THE SINGAPORE SITUATION CONFERENCE ON JOINT ACTION FOR MISSION

“JOINT ACTION” and “Mission” have been the major concerns of this Conference. We have attempted:

To explore the situation confronting the churches in our area and in our different countries, and to discern the ways in which the Holy Spirit is leading us, to the widest extent possible within the limits of our separation as churches, to a united strategy and joint action, arising from our common obedience to our one Lord Jesus Christ.

In relation to our several “situations” we have become aware of great differences among us. Most of our Churches are in countries undergoing revolutionary and dynamic changes where they are confronted by new challenges and opportunities. Some churches are in secure, affluent societies with friendly governments that place no hindrance in the way of evangelism and encourage the Church in various forms of service. Others have little security of this kind and are less tempted to complacency. In some countries, the Christian Church feels itself threatened by the majority groups among whom they live. But in all countries Christians are seeking to play a positive role in their nation’s life. Some churches have clear opportunities of expansion and growth, while for others the way is hard, results meagre and government policy unfavorable.

In spite of these differences we have also recognized many similarities among us. In many cities the rapid development of urbanization and industrialization is producing a new technological society with its own types of mass men. This is a development that the churches have scarcely begun to contemplate, far less to meet in its challenges and seize in its opportunities. As far as the villages are concerned the churches face a double problem. On the one hand, the flow of population into the towns isolates village life and deprives it of its natural leadership. On the other hand, in large areas of our countries most men still live in villages, whereas the churches’ approach to the village is determined by their urban setting.

These varied situations — of promise, of seemingly overwhelming difficulty — combine with other factors of security or insecurity, affluence or non-affluence, friendly or unfriendly governments to make us not quite of one mind in contemplating new and united ways of obedience in mission.

New Tasks

Any consideration of new and united obedience has to be in the context of fresh opportunities, and the need to be more aware of what are the real growing edges of the churches, and the priorities about which decisions must be made.

We are aware of the help trained sociologists can give us. But even without that help we are aware of certain challenges before us in many places that spell out priorities in mission:

rapidly growing cities, urbanization and industrialization with the consequent breakdown of traditional ways of life;

a greatly increased student population; the need not only to provide pastoral care for Christian students but to win student minds, at their formative stage, for Christ and His cause; and the importance of penetrating the University as such with the Gospel;

the challenge of resurgent religions and rival ideologies to the Christian faith;

the needs of rural communities for means of full livelihood in the midst of the radical changes of the new day;

the need of immigrants and local minorities to be integrated into local communities in many of our countries;

the opportunities provided by means of mass communication through radio, film, television and literature.

In seeking to reach a judgment about priorities among these various opportunities, help can be given by trained sociologists and others of special technical competence. The real need is for insight into the working of God's Spirit in our time.

This recognition of the priority which must be given to the growing edges of the Church is particularly urgent in our part of the world where Christians are still a small minority of the population and where the majority have yet to be effectively faced with the fact of Jesus Christ.

The question here is not merely one of listing additional areas of service where the Church ought to be in the midst "as one who serves." It is the much more radical question of seeing how the Church's basic mission may be accomplished in new and bewildering situations. Should the approach be one of a static mentality and rigid traditionalism, it cannot bring the Church into that living encounter with the world which means effective and relevant mission.

For this, we must rediscover what it means for us in the modern situation to become once more a "pilgrim church."

Institutions

The Christian Churches have established many institutions of teaching, healing, and other services as an expression of their mission. Many of these institutions are still effective means of Christian service within our nations. We recognize, however, that several different situations confront us. In certain areas there is government or community pressure to take over some, at least, of our institutions; in others the maintenance of these institutions is a burden on the limited resources of the Churches; and in yet others the opportunities of new forms of service are so pressing

that the preservation of so many traditional institutions is called into question.

No generalizations are, therefore, possible about the question of retaining, giving up or increasing the number of institutions as expressions of Christian mission. The question in any given circumstance is whether they are now adequate and relevant. It is here that our understanding of the Church as a pilgrim people must be rethought and allowed to determine our policy.

We are ready to give up institutions when we see that they are out of date, wasteful of resources, and a hindrance to mission. We have not been able to determine the circumstances in which we would relinquish such institutions or be compelled to relinquish them.

Possible criteria considered for decision in such circumstances have been:

Are such institutions an expression of our obedience as Churches?

Do they express our sharing in God's love for men?

Do they put an undue strain on the resources of the Church, preventing these from being used in new and promising tasks?

Can the Churches' witness and obedience be better expressed in fewer, better-quality institutions?

Are the conditions demanded of the Churches in a particular country such that the Churches cannot accept them?

Are there needs and opportunities for service and witness to be met by increasing the number and variety of institutions?

It is such considerations that, despite our different evaluations of our present methods and institutions, have forced us, in the light of our common obedience to Christ who is Lord of the world as well as of the Church, to see two areas where obedient action is being demanded of us, namely, the area of the congregation, the heart and center of Christian worship and obedience to the Gospel, and the area of Joint Action for Mission.

The Congregation

We have had much heart-searching concerning the life of our local congregations. We believe there are problems in local congregational life as at present structured in our Churches, arising from the following factors:

the patterns of organization taken over from the West, and from an earlier form of parochial society which do not meet the needs of the new patterns of Asian society;

the general remoteness of our forms of liturgy, music, architecture and theology from the cultural life of the people;

the centers of power and influence in society such as government, industry and the universities not yet penetrated effectively by Christians;

the need for relevant Christian education and nurture in the congregation, related to the common life of the people of God;

the need for dialogue in the light of the Word of God, as well as the preaching of the Word from the pulpit;

the need for new forms of Christian fellowship and service in the natural communities of neighborhood, home and place of work;

the need of congregations in close proximity to one another to make more manifest their unity in Christ;

the need for greater lay participation within the courts of the Church.

Several of these factors relate to the concept of "the ministry." In this connection we have noted that in some parts of Asia experiments with voluntary clergy are going on. We welcome also developments in theological education in Asia that are concentrating on the need of new and different approaches from the traditional one which concentrates the functions of teacher, pastor, preacher and priest in one man. Other factors relate to the present inadequacy of our congregational structures, and we believe there is much for us to rethink here in the light of our mission and calling to be God's people gathered in order that we may be scattered with effect in God's world.

Joint Action

We believe God's mission in our varied circumstances is challenging us to think out new ways of obedience. Even before we have solved the problems of Faith and Order and our separation as Churches, there is a vast area where we are free to think, pray, plan, and act together. Only as we use this freedom can we enlarge the area of our common life. We have been concerned to face up to this in terms of Joint Action for Mission.

Here we have not found it easy to make headway. While agreeing that churches are called to mission in their own area and to the ends of the earth, we have found it difficult to avoid the tendency to see this as anything more than adding more co-operative projects to the list of those we are doing. Nevertheless, we do agree that when we go home to our several countries, we must come together as the Christians and Churches in one place, be it country, region, or district, to look together at the over-all picture of mission there. Careful survey and fact-finding work will have to be done together, and we are sure that the initiative for this lies not with E.A.C.C. or W.C.C. but with us and our Churches. If we are to make new headway, it must depend on vision, inspiration, persuasion, mutual trust, and obedience in our areas. We must be on our guard against looking at isolated bits of our work. We must see it steadily and see it whole. This will demand of us real effort, patient preparation and enough time to enable us to have confidence in each other as Churches.

A policy of this kind, if accepted by our Churches, would mean joint

action in several ways. At every stage care must be taken to ensure that the Churches in a country plan for the maximum use of their own resources.

1. Church groups, in the whole country, region or district, would review together the total task and the total resources and would seek to reach a common mind as to which projects should be carried out jointly, and which done separately.
2. Projects which different Church groups have consented to undertake jointly or as part of a common strategy should be given priority in any allocation of funds and personnel. It is understood that joint action for mission will be concerned with central missionary tasks and not with merely peripheral matters.
3. If it is decided by everybody in consultation that a certain project will best be done denominationally, Joint Action for Mission implies that other Church groups would still support the project without seeking denominational advantages.
4. Where the projects are of such size as to require new financial resources, representatives of Christian agencies whose assistance is being sought should be brought into consultation. It is important that Churches seeking such aid should reveal all sources of aid open to them for any project.
5. It is understood that where resources of personnel and funds from outside the area are involved, provision should be made for the full participation of related mission agencies in planning and decision.

In the interests of the total work of the Church in each country in Asia, we appeal not only to the mission agencies to give priority to programs and actions expressing the common mind of all the Churches in the area, but also to the service agencies of the Churches in other parts of the world. It is our conviction that such agencies, many of which have large material resources, can unintentionally do great damage to the Christian cause by supporting major projects on a basis of unilateral consultation only. We urge that such agencies also undertake work in Asia only after full ecumenical consultation. Neither is it advisable that Churches in Asia should make unilateral approaches to such agencies without full local consultation.

In connection with the implications of such changes, we have been aware that some have been concerned that changes may mean reduction of support from related Churches and mission boards. We are aware of the positive value of the intimate bilateral relationships that have grown up over the years, in terms of prayer, friendship and money. These must be kept in mind and their values maintained in such new relationships as may be worked out.

But more important is the challenge in all this to our own churches,

towards a more faithful stewardship. We must seek to strengthen this aspect of our churches' obedience. In many of our churches, stewardship has been inadequate, and the missionary obligation of the church has not been fully recognized. This is true, even though we know that in some countries plans have been conceived locally and presented with conviction and enthusiasm by their sponsors, and strong local support has been raised.

In working out financial relationships between Churches and mission agencies, it is essential to keep three facts in balance:

long-continued financial dependence of one Church on another for the support of its normal life and work can be dangerous to both giver and receiver;

self-support can be a barren concept where the self so supported is simply determined by limited local resources;

the amount of help received by a Church from another must be such that the receiving Church can use it without weakening its own integrity and without putting strains on its own life that it cannot spiritually sustain.

A fundamental condition of advance in Joint Action for Mission is that there must be full recognition not only of the Church as a universal community, but also of the Church as the people of God in each place, who together increasingly must seek to embody this fact in new structures of common life and action.

The implications of this for our membership in confessional families, and for Church Union, in each place, must be explicitly faced.

We have also been reminded, by the presence of Fr. P. J. de Wit, sent by the Roman Catholic Bishops residing in North Borneo and Sarawak as an observer, of the weakness to which the Church is subject by the separation between our Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. We give thanks for the new ecumenical climate which is beginning to affect our relationship to one another.

We recognize also that there are many other Churches that find it difficult to participate in the Ecumenical Movement. In a world where the tasks are overwhelming and the mission is urgent, all these divisions compromise the Church's message and call into question its credentials as the reconciled and reconciling community. We accept for ourselves the challenge which this brings to deeper repentance, sustained intercession for one another, and greater humility.

Conclusion

As we come to the close of this Conference and issue this report to our Churches and Christian Councils for their study and action, we give thanks to God that He has brought us together here, and that we, and all our Churches, can live by His promise to keep us together and increase our fellowship.

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THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
COMMISSION ON ECUMENICAL MISSION AND RELATIONS
475 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, NEW YORK 27, NEW YORK

May 2, 1963

TO COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES
AND CONSULTANTS IN ASIA

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James D. Brown
Calvin H. Hazlett
Samuel H. Moffett
John P. Muilenburg
Horace W. Ryburn
Ernest L. Fogg
L. Newton Thurber

Dear Friends:

Last Thursday we received our first copies of the printed report of the Situation Conferences in Asia. We are sending one to you with this letter.

We discussed this in Hong Kong, but I was not able to report to you as to the actual content and substance in detail. Now you will have it before you.

The churches with which we are related in Asia will be receiving copies of this from the E.A.C.C. or directly from London. They were printed both in London and the United States, and these can be secured from London more cheaply than from the U.S.A. We are paying fifty cents a copy for these.

We are sharing the Report with the Commission and Staff here in the United States, and I am also sending copies to the Commission Representatives in other parts of the world. I believe the questions raised here may be profitable for our continued study. If you want any assistance in securing additional copies, we will be glad to be of help.

We are taking a proposed action concerning the follow-up of the Situation Conferences to the next Commission meeting, which will then be shared with the related churches abroad.

Sincerely,

John C. Smith

John C. Smith
General Secretary

JCS/s/f
Enclosure

cc: Regional Secretaries
Other Commission Representatives
Dr. Black
Miss Shannon

